

RETRACING A TIME-DIMMED TRAIL

By Walter Williams in the Kansas City Star

Lexington, Lafayette County, Mo., Aug. 5.—The commission form of government is solving the road problem at Lexington and in the central road district of Lafayette County. While other countries talk of improving and marking the Santa Fe Trail, Lafayette County, not content with conversational exercise on the subject of highways, is improving the old road and marking it with stone bridges.

This is done under the commission form of government applied to roads. Business methods, some money and a fine quality of public service are making over the roads of Lexington and the district of which it is the center.

Lexington was headquarters of the Santa Fe trade. Huge warehouses were here, and here the freighters for years had their base supplies. Back in the 20s the old trail ran through Lexington. It is a curious coincidence that the trail turned into the old town around the corner on which is now the residence of Edwin J. McGrew, father of the commission which is making over the old road and some new ones.

The Lexington plan affords a model for road districts all along the old road. The roads leading to this historic county seat, city of schools and churches, of factories and coal operations, had become almost impassable for three months or more in every year. The New Missouri, built progressively upon the broad foundations of the Old Missouri, decided that better roads would mean a better Lexington and a better Lafayette County.

MADE USE OF THE ROAD LAW.

The citizens invoked the aid of the Missouri Road Law, organized a special road district, and appointed commissioners for this district. The commissioners were selected by a joint session of the county court and the city council. Oswald Winkler, manufacturer of furniture; E. J. McGrew, coal operator, and Dr. G. W. Fredendall, physician, were named. They had no axes to grind, no political favorites to reward or political enemies to punish. They were business and professional men interested in making better roads.

The vote establishing the road district showed an overwhelming majority for the new plan. Then by an equally large majority the district decided to issue \$120,000 in bonds to build hard roads. It is estimated that these roads built of rock will average in cost \$6,000 a mile. The building of twenty miles of hard roads is thus made possible. The validity of the bond issue, which is the first in Missouri of its kind, having been questioned, the supreme court has been asked to pass upon the bonds. In the meantime, however, the commissioners have been applying business methods to road building. The Santa Fe Trail, where it is open four miles on either side of Lexington, has been cleared of weeds, widened, at some places straightened, and concrete culverts or bridges placed where needed. License fees and special taxes go to the road district fund, about \$15,000 a year.

With this the superintendent of

road construction, J. H. Waugh, under the commission's direction, is building rock culverts with headers that can be seen and constructed to last. A new invention has cheapened and made more practical the building of culverts of varying sizes. The commission bought the right to use the invention in Lafayette County and is at work with it.

"Only \$800," said Commissioner McGrew, as the journey was made over the old road, "has been used in the purchase of machinery and equipment. We have no road overseers and no road contractors. We employ our own labor and have about a hundred men at work. We have a road tax of fifty cents on the \$100 for road purposes. This will pay the bonds, principal and interest in twenty years."

When the Lexington special district shows the good results of its progressive methods it is confidently expected that the district west, including Wellington, to the Jackson County line, will form another road district, following the same plan of improvement, and that the district to the east, including Dover and Waverly, will do the same. Through both districts the Santa Fe Trail runs. With the completion of this improvement, one-third of which is actually in progress, the Santa Fe Trail will be graded, macadamized and marked with stone culverts and bridges through Lafayette County. As this county joins Jackson, with its macadamized roads, on the east, and as two other counties on the old Boon's Lick-Santa Fe Road, St. Charles and Boone, have macadamized highways along the old road nearly completed, more than one-third of the way across the state is assured for a cross-state stone highway.

BUT ARE MAKING THE EARTH ROADS GOOD.

"We are building rock roads, of course," said J. R. Moorehead of Lexington, "but while the validity of the bonds voted for that purpose is undetermined, we are making use of the material at hand and making the earth roads passable. It adds to the prosperity of both country and town."

Commissioner Winkler showed the value of widening the roads, clearing out the brush and weeds. Commissioner McGrew pointed out the economy of culvert construction, the straightening of water courses and the cutting down of hills. A motor car makes with ease the journey over the roads of the Lexington special district and the farmer may haul practically twice as much to market in less space of time and for a longer period during each year. So much for business methods applied to building roads.

Gilliard Rupe, the first farmer in Lafayette County, had a farm adjoining the old trail to the south of Lexington. Rupe's farm consisted of ten acres under cultivation. He had made his home at Boonville, where from Old Franklin to the new town he had run a ferry. Rupe's Branch at Boonville was named after the pioneer ferryman. He had taken settlers across in his primitive ferryboat and, hearing glowing reports from those who returned from the farther west,

Lafayette County farmer. He was a grand uncle of Frances M. Cockrell, former United States senator from Missouri.

The roadside through Lafayette County is rich in history. The old Masonic College drew students from the Santa Fe Trail. E. N. Hopkins, banker actively interested in historical research, has in his bank vault at Lexington the record books of the old college. Stephen B. Elkins, United States senator from West Virginia, was a pupil. A petition to the faculty, drawn by Elkins, is preserved. Elkins wanted the college faculty to declare a holiday that he might, in 1854, attend the county fair. He wrote out a respectful petition to the faculty and called on his fellow students for signature. A half dozen signed with him the petition for the holiday. All the other signatures are apparently written by Elkins himself. Whether or not the petition was granted and the holiday declared the minutes do not show.

RELICS OF THE ROAD.

Captain Joseph A. Wilson, 70 years old, has a collection of relics of the road unqualed in the state. On John Reed's farm near Wellington was found a Spanish halberd of plated silver, apparently of the Seventeenth Century. Did one of Coronado's men reach Lafayette County or did some Indian brave bring it from farther west? The Wilson office is a historical curiosity shop. Here is a pyramid of cannon balls from the Lexington battle fields, the pilot wheel of a steamer sunk off the wharf, and the flat whip used in the punishment of criminal negroes.

"A flat whip was used," said Captain Wilson, "because the ordinary whip would leave welks upon the negro's back. The negro whose back showed marks of the whip would not sell as readily, because he would be regarded as a bad negro. Negro men often sold in Lexington for \$1,500 and negro women for \$800." Captain Wilson has the revolver which Bill Anderson carried at Centuria and a record book of J. and R. Aull written with a quill pen in 1832. Captain Wilson's uncle, Robert Aull, is given credit as having started in business Alexander Majors, for years one of the leaders of the Santa Fe trade expeditions. A lad walked into Aull's trading store, where goods from the East were being unloaded. A knife struck his fancy. It could be bought for \$1.50. He needed it in his work, but he did not have the \$1.50. "You look like an honest boy," said Aull. "I will credit you, though cash has been the invariable rule."

A few days later the youth paid the bill for the knife in beeswax. The youth was Alexander Majors. "I think my treatment by Mr. Aull," said Majors, "made a business man of me."

Judge William Young, George P. Venable and James Hale, discussing the route of the old trail through Lafayette County, agreed as to the location. Part of Main street in Lexington is the old trail. An earlier road ran across the country to the southward. Lafayette County in early days was called Lillard and included a much larger territory than at present. Judge Young who has written a history of the county now in the hands of the publisher, believes that Fort Orleans, the earliest settlement of the French thus far west, was within the present limits of the county. The location and fate of this first French settle-

ment has been a mystery. Indians killed the occupants of the fort and there is not a vestige of the fortification left. According to Judge Young, the fort was situated on the Missouri River between the mouth of Tabo Creek and Berlin, north of the old trail. "Here he says, 'in 1720, even before the first town was founded in Missouri at Ste. Genevieve, the French established a fortified trading post. With its destruction French sovereignty practically ceased.'"

Judge Young located the site of the old fort near the covered bridge on Tabo Creek. After leaving Lexington the Santa Fe trail goes again more directly toward the west. Nutter's stagestand was on the old road a mile south of Wellington. Hambright's stagestand was in Jackson County, after the trail crosses the Sni Creek. The Sni was forded by the early trail-ers. At the Sni ford are ruins of the James Warder House a noted place in the early day along the old trail. Here is now a summer camp. Here also are the ruins of a church and a distillery. Joseph Warder, the story goes, was a Hardshell Baptist preacher nearly a century ago. He built on one side of the old Santa Fe Trail a Hardshell Baptist church, where he preached, as occasion offered, the iron gospel of that faith. Across the trail but a few yards distant he built a distillery, which he operated and the product of which he sold, pure and undefiled, as occasion demanded. His home was upon a rock eminence to the east of church and distillery. The traveler along the trail at Warder's ford was compelled to make the dangerous crossing of the Sni, but he had the opportunity of fortifying himself for the fording by a visit to a distillery or church, or both.

Circuit Court.

In the circuit court Thursday the case of John Domineck vs. the Western Coal and Mining Company was concluded and the jury returned a verdict for the plaintiff for \$12,000. The plaintiff was represented by Alex. Graves and Chas. Lyons; the defendant by Gen. Harvey C. Clark and W. H. Chiles.

Divorces were granted Thursday to the plaintiffs in the following cases: James F. Williams vs. Parthena Williams; Tobe Hardin vs. Lydia Hardin; Orville Neil vs. Richard G. Neil; Mary Green vs. John Green; Curtis Morgan vs. Edith Morgan; Mary Bennett vs. Joel Bennett; Orentio Fiorio vs. Magherita Fiorio and Samuel J. Puckett vs. Daisy Puckett.

The court adjourned to meet September 16.

Misses Mary Cohrs and Annie Dankers went to Kansas City Sunday morning for a few days' visit.

Miss Bess Johnson went to Kansas City Thursday evening for a few days' visit with her sister, Mrs. J. R. Sydnor.

Mrs. C. A. Keith and two daughters, Misses Nadine and Aileen, were in Higginsville yesterday visiting relatives.

Frank Hoefler was in Higginsville yesterday on business.

Mrs. M. L. Belt returned to Higginsville yesterday after visiting relatives in this city.

Judge Samuel Davis returned to Marshall Thursday evening after adjourning court until September 16.

Geo. M. Long went to Kansas City Thursday on business.

Corder Notes.

Miss Gladys Wilson returned to her home in Kansas City Monday evening after a visit with friends in this city.

A large number of Corder's young folks attended a moonlight picnic in Blackburn on Tuesday night. The Corder band assisted the Blackburn band in furnishing the music for the occasion.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Babbington of St. Louis are visiting in this city this week as the guests of Dr. and Mrs. Lewis Carthrae.

Miss Bernice Ham left Monday for Blue Springs where she will visit. She will also visit in Kansas City before returning home.

The following property changed hands in Corder this week. Ebb Caskey to Henry Schumaker a house and lot on Cottage Row, consideration \$600. John Winters to Wm. Knight his house and lot near Main street. Wm. Blunt to John Winters his house and lot on South Lafayette street.

Mr. and Mrs. J. S. Miller and son, Guy, left Monday for Spickard, Mo., where they will spend some time visiting old friends.

The fine quality of the music produced by the Corder band is getting to be known generally. Not only were they called upon to play at the moonlight picnic at Blackburn, but they have been engaged to entertain the crowd with music at the Woodmen's picnic to be held August 20th at Mayview. We are glad to see the band make progress and it is our desire that they shall continue to do so.

Miss Eunice Willis left for her home in Armstrong, by way of Malta Bend, this week after an extended visit in this community with friends and relatives.

Ebb Caskey and his mother, Mrs. Sarah Caskey, spent last Sunday in Kansas City as the guests of Mr. and Mrs. James Talent.

Misses Bertha and Addie Schaeperkoetter and Mr. William Schaeperkoetter were the happy host and hostesses of about 100 invited guests at their home in the country last Friday night. There was no limit to the number of games that comprised the evenings entertainment and the house and lawn both were used to carry out the program. Elegant luncheon was served during the evening and the many guests expressed their disappointment when the evening had passed. This was one of the largest social functions of its kind we have seen in this community for some time.

Rev. Squire, the pastor of the Presbyterian church of this city, who resigned some time ago, packed and loaded his household goods and left this week for his new home in New Madrid, Mo., where he will take charge of a church. We are sorry to have Rev. Squire leave this city but hope even brighter prospects for the future will be before him.

That husky bunch of Corder fellows called ball players gave Houstonia a few more pointers in art last Sunday when they wandered over to the home of the league trailers and picked up an easy won victory off the natives, 6 to 2. With this victory Corder not only holds second place in the Lafayette County League but are making it so hot for

"New Germany" to hold first place that there are not enough electric fans or base ball fans to cool off the Concordians. Corder has decided to coach Houstonia for next year and

will give them two lessons on next Sunday when they appear on Corder's diamond. But Mr. Fan fits 35 cents instead of 25 cents—a double header.

Committees Organize.

The Democratic county committee met Tuesday and elected B. C. Drummond chairman, and Henry Chiles secretary.

The Republican committee elected John Taubman, Sr., chairman, and U. G. Phetzing secretary.

Both committees passed a resolution to present to the county court asking that the pay of judges and clerks be increased from \$1.50 to \$3.00 per day. This move on the part of the committees will commend itself to everyone who has ever served as either a clerk or judge at a primary or general election. No more nerve racking or tiresome work can be imagined than that asked of the judges and clerks and the compensation should be increased as requested by the committees.

Pheasants Come High.

Thursday in Justice Harding's court George Hoehn of near Winton was fined \$30.00 and costs for killing one of the pheasants released in the county last spring. The fine and costs amounted to \$40.50.

Three other lots of pheasants were received here yesterday by Prosecuting Attorney Keith, Sheriff Peacock and Dr. J. W. Meng. These will be distributed through the county as the others were and it is to be hoped that none of them will be taken for peacocks and killed. Mistaken identity sometimes is very disastrous in its results.

Transfer Business Sold.

Oscar Andreen, general manager of The Old Line Transfer Co., bought Thursday the bus and transfer business of Mrs. Clarence Summers. Mr. Andreen is gradually gathering up the loose ends of the transfer business in Lexington and will make The Old Company vastly superior in point of service to anything ever attempted before by that company.

Mrs. J. H. Thompson of Kansas City arrived Thursday to visit the family of J. R. Moorehead.

Chas. Eglehoff returned to Kansas City Thursday evening after a visit here with relatives and friends.

Rev. and Mrs. Geo. P. Taubman of Kansas City arrived Thursday evening to visit the family of John Taubman.

J. R. Wilnot was in Kansas City yesterday on business.

Chas. Hoefler and brother-in-law, W. R. Belt of Muskogee, Oklahoma, went to Kansas City yesterday to spend the day.

Miss Della Crowder and Miss Stella Bandon returned Thursday night from a visit in Excelsior Springs.

Mrs. Robert Pointer and three children left yesterday for a visit with relatives in Louisville, Kansas.

Reid Ryland left Thursday evening for Birmingham, Alabama, after a few weeks' visit here with relatives.

Cleve Terhune went to Kansas City Thursday on a business trip.

B. C. Drummond went to Wellington Thursday evening on business.

Mr. and Mrs. Chris Walk and daughter, Miss Bertha, went to Kansas City Thursday to spend the day.